

CULTURE & ARTS

TRAVELING WITH JEWISH TASTE

Eggspress Yourself a Little Differently than Usual this Pesach

By Carol Goodman Kaufman

The Hebrew calendar is lunisolar, combining the lunar cycle with the solar year. Our months begin on the new Moon, and many of our festivals fall on the full Moon. These include Passover, Sukkot, Purim, Tu B'Shevat, and Tu B'Av (The Tu stands for the number 15, and a full Moon reaches its peak on the 15th day of the month).



You make the call – a piece of gefilte fish or Saturn's moon Epimetheus as captured by NASA's Cassini spacecraft in 2015?

One explanation for placing festivals on that day is that the full Moon is considered a time of joy and celebration, freedom, and abundance. And according to the Kabbalah, God's feminine face creates souls on the full Moon.

Surveys indicate that the most celebrated Jewish holiday in the United States is Passover. As always, it begins on a full Moon, the 15th of Nisan. Now, Nisan usually falls in April when the Pink Moon, a Native American name for the silver disk, peaks. But there are plenty of other names that may speak more to our tradition – and they have to do with the traditional subject of this column: food.

For example, coastal tribes in North America coined the name Fish Moon to mark the start of fish spawning season. In my decidedly Jewish imagination, I like to think that when opening the front door for Elijah, one of our ancestors looked up to the night sky, and upon spying the big white circle, our forebear said, "Why, that looks like Bubbie's gefilte fish!"

The Anglo-Saxons claim credit for calling the full Moon of Spring the Egg Moon, but I like to think that much earlier in the world's history, it was one of our people who named it. While checking the sky to see if the Moon was full enough for the festival to begin, our ancestor saw the hero ingredient of Passover.

Now, any Jewish cook who has spent time in the kitchen knows just how many dozens of eggs we consume during the eight-day holiday. In our house, Joel threatens every year to check our cholesterol levels the day before the holiday and on the eighth day.

But this year presents a unique challenge to our culinary skills. Passover food is already expensive. How are we going to manage meal preparation with eggs going for a national average of over \$7.00 a dozen?

Would it be possible to go eggless as well as leavenless? Would kneidlach hold together without the eggs? Would matzah brei without the eggs even begin to satisfy?

I decided to give it a try.

My first experiment was an attempt at egg-free matzah balls. I potckied around with several recipes to find something that resembled the beloved traditional dumpling. I ended up with kneidlach that looked authentic, although

their core was gluey. Cooking much longer than the original recipes' instructions solved that problem. As for flavor, I was surprised that I couldn't detect the applesauce. However, the chicken broth was definitely necessary for the mix, even though I had cooked them in water flavored by chicken bouillon.

Finally, because hard matzah balls that require knife and fork are to me an abomination, one of my major goals was to achieve "floaters." Switching out some of the broth for seltzer did the trick. The kneidlach bobbed to the surface almost immediately.

The verdict: Joel liked them. I much prefer the real thing.

Next up was matzah brei. Again, I played around with some vegetarian and vegan recipes found online until I came up with a result that was surprisingly good and true to the original dish. At first, I thought that my judgment might have been influenced by the maple syrup I drizzled over the top of the scramble. Then Joel reminded me that we normally eat matzah brei with syrup or jam.

So, there you go. Two completely egg-free dishes for your Passover consideration. If you decide to try either or both of the recipes below, please let me know what you think! (Due to space consideration, matzah ball recipe will appear online.)

Eggless Matzah Brei

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 sheets of matzah, crumbled
1/2 cup ground quinoa*
1 cup boiling water
Pinch of salt
1 tablespoon butter
1/2 apple, diced small
1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
Maple syrup, jam, or cinnamon sugar for serving

DIRECTIONS:

- Combine the crumbled matzah, quinoa, apple, cinnamon, and the salt in a heatproof bowl.
Pour 1 cup boiling water over them and stir together. Let stand for 2 to 3 minutes.
While the matzah mixture is sitting, melt the butter in a large skillet.
Once it's sizzling, pour in the matzah mixture, cover and cook over a medium flame until it's golden brown and crisp, about 10 minutes, occasionally stirring it so that all pieces can brown.
Serve at once with your choice of topping.
*Simply grind some quinoa in a food processor.



Carol Goodman Kaufman, author of the Berkshire-set novel The First Murder, is at work on two new books for Next Chapter Press – a collection of cozy mysteries featuring food writer Kiki Coben and a children's book about a group of animal friends who live in a Florida park.



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